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ABSTRACT

Most counselor trainees do not know how to help clients elaborate their own unique meanings in life. To provide experiences to overcome this, the author has attempted to do the following in the practicum: (1) provide a simulated client experience for the trainee by having each individual in the group react to an emotional simulation sequence and then to explore his feelings to this stimulus; and (2) help the members of the practicum group explore the feelings of other group members in a constructive way, so that each "plays" counselor for the other. The model used involves the use of video play-back. One person in the group at a time per film reacts to the sequence and the group members and the instructor explore the reactions that the individuals experience. Following the sequence the video which shows the person viewing the simulation film and the sound of the film is played back. The process of discussion is also filmed and can be replayed. The effects of this procedure are: (1) the T.V. gives a visual playback, and (2) the group process is captured and can be played back. The major assumption of this method is that the way a person feels in anxiety producing situations is a measure of the effectiveness that a person will have in a counseling situation. (Author/KJ)

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THE USE OF SIMULATION IN COUNSELOR EDUCATION

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It has been shown that the kinds of situations that produce anxiety in a client can be simulated, so that his reactions can be viewed by means of video tape and explored as a part of the counseling process (Kagan, Krathwohl, et.al., 1967: Schauble & Kagan, in press). The technique using films which simulate various kinds and intensities of emotional stress has been developed by the Inter-Personal Process of Recall Project at Michigan State University. Through our work with clients we have found that they often times fear two basic situations, either counselor-acceptance--to the point of real intimacy--or counselor-rejection--to the point of active hostility. Or the client may in fact fear his own power in his seduction or rejection of the counselor. Further, we have found through in-depth exploration, that counselors experience anxiety along similar dimensions.

The simulation films themselves are of a single actor looking directly at the viewer. The actors were rather individual in their expressions of emotion, but did not convey any implication of a particular situation or story. For example, directions given to the actor for one scene were, "We want the person you are talking to, to feel as if he has done something terrible to you, you are frightened of him, yet can no longer restrain the hurt you feel. Don't specifically say what has been done to you, only that something has been done to you by the viewer which has been very destructive to you." (Kagan, Krathwohl, et.al., 1967.

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I have designed one method for the use of these emotional simulation films in counselor education. One thing is clear; there is certainly more than one method for the same sort of goals, or in other terms, there's more than one way to skin a master student, effectionately speaking. My use of the films relates to two major problems that crop up in counselor supervision: 1) The fact that few master students have actually been clients or know what it feels like to be a client, and therefore what kind of impact they are making on a client, and 2) The fact that one of the common statements that comes from a practicum group is (to no one's surprise, I'm sure): "I know that a person's feelings are important, but what the hell do I do with them?" These kinds of student reactions seem to be related to a more general life-pattern. Most of their lives, they have been trained to cool it, not to be direct, and not to really help a person more deeply explore those things which are bothering him. Most counselor trainees don't know how to help clients elaborate their own unique meanings in life. Therefore, what I try to do in the practicum is to try to hit both of these dimensions: 1) To provide a simulated client experience for the counselor trainee by having each individual in the group react to an emotional simulation sequence and then to explore his feelings to this stimulus and 2) To help the members of the practicum group explore the feelings of the other group members in a constructive way, so that each "plays" counselor for the other.

Technical set-up

The model which I use involves the use of video play-back. I have one person in the group at a time per film react to the sequence and have the group members as well as myself explore the reactions that the individual experiences. I like to use two video recorders, one camera for each,

two TV monitors, (one for each recorder), and a projector to show the emotional simulation film. Both cameras are fixed on the proverbial "hot-seat," the seat in which the reactor for that film is seated. I play the film and record the person viewing it through one of the cameras and video recorder. Following the sequence, I play the video back which shows the person viewing the film and the sound of the film on it. In this manner, we can stop the play back at any time the reactor or one of the group members wants. The video play-back seems to give the person a greater sense of how he is reacting to this particular emotional sequence, by actually seeing himself, (and is certainly more interesting than watching an audio tape spin around on the recorder.)

At those times that the play back is stopped the group members ask such questions as:

1) "What are you feeling," or picking up like specific feelings--"you seem to be angry here," etc.?
2) "What does this person, (i.e. the actor,) think of you?"
3) "What do you want him to think of you?"
4) How do you feel towards him?--"why (or how) does he make you feel that way?"
5) "What would you do in a situation like this? What would you like to do? What's keeping you from doing it? What are you afraid of?"
6) To whom else in your life do you respond in this way?"

From these types of questions, the group does get the knack of being able to follow a lead by helping the person elaborate his feelings through reflections or more direct probing. One person at a time serves as the reactor, in order to keep the focus on him, rather than spread it around, and rather than having the whole group talk about their reactions without concentrating on exploring any of the reactions in depth. The kinds of situations that are depicted through the use of emotional simulation are those which seem initially important in the counseling process, or in any human interaction. These emotions run the gamut from mild to intensive hostility and acceptance or seduction, the kinds of fears that people seem to initially have in human interaction.

You may wonder what the other camera and recorder are for. The other camera is used to film the process of the discussion, with the reactor as the focus, (the individual on whom the camera is focused), but to pick up the sound from the whole group. In this manner, we can then replay the process of the exploration of feelings to get a sense of the impact of the different kinds of questions and reflections. The members of the group can then hear what they say and then explore with the reactor what kind of impact their questions had. For example, did their questions or a particular question help the person to explore his concerns? This kind of exploration can take place through the video tape without stopping the initial process and destroying it, but viewing it after the fact. In this way, the group members can help themselves see what kinds of impact they may be having with their own clients. They can see that the way they react to the person on the film does have implications for their own behavior, and therefore for their behavior in counseling. They can get direct feedback from the members of their own group as to what kind of impact they are making.

Let me give some examples as to what I mean, some examples taken from actual work in my own practicum group. The first situation is of a black student who was watching a mild acceptance sequence of the emotional simulation films. Through the video recall he came to see how he reacted to the actor in an ambivalent fashion. On the one hand, he felt the actor had something to say to him, that he was an educated man, and that he felt this way because that actor was white and in a position of authority. But on the other hand, he had feelings of anger because he felt the actor seemed to be hiding something from him, some criticism that he wasn't making.

These ambivalent feelings seem to put the counselor trainee in a bind, and as a result, his behavior in this situation would have been very formal, a strategy of behavior to which this person resorts when the level of stress goes up. For him, that is a form of behavior which is safe, and which keeps the distance between him and the other person. At one point in the replay, he noticed himself sitting back in a chair and tapping his leg and remarked "I know I'm angry when I do that." The replay and the questions that were asked seemed to bring his feelings into the here-and-now. A second sequence was one in which a girl responded to mild seduction by shrinking back in her seat and folding her arms across her chest. The approach of the actor on the stimulus film seemed to turn her off immediately. As she seemed to be seeking support through the discussion of her actions, one of the other women in the group, a nun, said to her, "Why do you get turned off so fast? He doesn't turn me off like that." The questioning eventually got around to what kind of behavior turns her on, and, in fact, to what would happen if she were counseling men who attracted her. She saw that she would want to make men to whom she was attracted interested in her, to the point where they would ask her out on a date, an obvious role conflict in the counseling situation.

In review, let's take a look at the effects of this procedure. There are two major foci. One, the T.V. does give a visual play back. It allows the person to see himself, to look at how he comes across to other people. Especially so in the play back of the discussion, the person can then see his animation, his humor, and the way his anxiety is expressed. Secondly, you can capture the group process and play it back. You then provide an instant stimulus by which to talk about the behavior of each individual and how he might respond differently. The major assumption of this method is that the way a person feels in anxiety producing situations is a measure

of the effectiveness that that person will have in a counseling situation, because it relates to how well that person can react honestly and non-defensively in that counseling situation.

Is this procedure all necessary? If you have TV around it's certainly worth a try. Many of the same effects, however, may be achieved without the use of TV playback but simply through the use of the emotional simulation films alone.